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ABSTRACT

At their inception, community colleges adopted the traditional department/division structure. But there is a trend in community colleges toward combining related disciplines into a single department. Despite any administrative effort to subordinate or abolish the traditional department, the faculty within each discipline considers itself a close-knit community. This community exerts great influence on educational quality and indoctrinates new instructors much more successfully than does the college. The community college department is moving toward the four-year institution department in which instructors exercise a great deal of self-governance. Tenure and seniority are important in departmental governance. Part-time instructors have little voice in departmental governance and paraprofessionals have none, but a trend is beginning toward including paraprofessionals as members of the bargaining unit, partly because of the potential danger of paraprofessionals being used to staff classes during a strike. Student activism is still a minor movement in community colleges, but changes involving more relevant courses and students' rights have been made as a result of the activism of the 60's. To counteract the insularity of subject-matter groupings, colleges are experimenting with plans for mixing departmental units in the same building and classrooms. To counteract the trend toward self-governance, administrators are experimenting with new structures to replace the department and chairman, most commonly the division headed by an administrator. (KM)

THE DEPARTMENT/DIVISION STRUCTURE IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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INTRODUCTION

Since the middle of the 1960's numerous in-service training conferences and seminars for department chairmen have been sponsored by consortiums of colleges, universities and state agencies. Among these were a series of week-long seminars held during 1970-1972 by the League for Innovation in the Community Colleges, a two-day conference by Sam Houston State University in 1972, a three-day workshop by the Kansas-Nebraska Consortium in 1973, workshops in 1972 and 1973 by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and a special in-service training program by the Florida Division of Community Colleges and Florida State University in 1972.

For the first three conferences the ERIC Clearinghouse provided papers on various aspects of the role of the department/division chairman. At the conferences the chairmen requested that separate papers or a book be prepared on the duties and responsibilities of the department chairman, the role of the department/division in the college structure, the characteristics and the role of the department/division chairman and the conditions of employment, qualifications, in-service training, selection methods and patterns of remuneration.

This paper, "The Department/Division Structure in the Community College", describes the nature of the department/division organization. It reviews its origin, analyzes its composition and explores the influences that are causing changes in its organization, its relationship to the college structure and the growing importance of non-faculty members in its governance.

The conclusion lists the major developments and the probable changes that will affect the department/division in the next five years.

THE DEPARTMENT/DIVISION STRUCTURE IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

John Lombardi

Most colleges divide their teaching staff and course offerings among departments or divisions organized by subject area or discipline. This structure reflects the long-standing conception of the total range of educational subject matter as being composed of a cluster of related disciplines. As an administrative unit, the department consists of a group of instructors trained to teach the same or closely related subjects: English, foreign languages, life sciences, mathematics, social sciences, etc.

Discipline Orientation in the Department

When the community colleges were founded in the early part of the twentieth century, they adopted the traditional department/division structure. The number and composition of these units varies widely from college to college. Although a few colleges have as many as thirty or more departments or divisions, seventy percent of the colleges have fewer than ten and college presidents prefer to keep the number down (Bushnell, 1973).

In all colleges there are some disciplines with no more than one or two instructors that do not warrant a separate organization. In these colleges, especially small ones, disciplines are combined, e.g., anatomy, biology, botany, and physiology; chemistry and physics; English and humanities; French, German, Spanish, etc.; philosophy and psychology. Two-year occupational subjects may be grouped in clusters--business, engineering, health, and trades.

The primary objective in combining subjects within a single department is to create a more economical and manageable organization for supervisory

purposes, not necessarily to fuse the subjects into a single interdisciplinary subject or to create a divisional pattern with an administrative head. The grouping of disciplines does not eliminate the departmental concept nor does it subordinate the centrality of the department in the institutional organization. Each combined grouping is treated as a department with a chairman as its supervisor.

Occasionally, in larger colleges a department may have informal internal subunits headed by a faculty member. For example, a social sciences department composed of economics, history, political science, and sociology instructors may informally designate one of the instructors from each of the disciplines to coordinate schedules, select tests, prepare syllabuses, and perform other routine activities. However, responsibility and ultimate authority reside in the departmental chairman.

But it is often from the members of such subunits that pressure arises for separate status including a department chairman. Thus as colleges grow, the number of departments increases as business separates from secretarial sciences; English, journalism and speech separate from each other; and philosophy separates from psychology. As a result of this fission large colleges now have as many as 30 or more separate departments. Not all groupings are separated however. Even in large colleges, groups of subjects are found in the earth sciences (anthropology, geography, and geology), foreign languages (French, German, Spanish, etc.) life sciences (anatomy, biology, botany, and physiology), social sciences (economics, history, and political science) and others. In 1971, at Los Angeles City College with a day enrollment of 10,000 and a faculty of 300, eighteen of the thirty-three departments included from two to twelve different subjects or disciplines. In all there were approximately 87 different subjects or disciplines

listed in the 1971-1972 catalogue. Among the fifteen single subject departments were chemistry, English, philosophy, physics, psychology, secretarial sciences and speech.

In some colleges, all departments are composed of two or more subjects. In a study of 536 regionally accredited junior colleges, Pierce found that two-thirds used the divisional structure. The number of these designating the divisional head as administrator was not mentioned (Pierce, 1971).

Tradition, pride, logic, and number of instructors are all factors in determining whether a department comprised of several disciplines will remain intact or be divided into separate departments. Foreign languages are nearly always organized into a single department whereas philosophy and psychology, English and speech are often separated. The combinations which make up earth sciences, life sciences, social sciences and physical sciences frequently appear. More and more, closely related vocational-technical units are combined with academic units into such departments as engineering technology, health sciences and public services. The groupings of subjects referred to in this paper are not necessarily those found in every college. For example, anthropology may be grouped with earth sciences in one college and with humanities in another.

These confusing and contradictory movements are part of the dynamics of the administrative organization of this key unit in the college. Despite the existence of apparently divisional groupings, the essential departmental characteristic of this model remains.

This development differs from that in the secondary schools and four-year colleges and universities. In the former there is no trend away from the departmental system of organization. In a survey of schools, in the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, eighty percent of all schools and

eighty-seven percent of those employing 100 or more teachers had departments. Ninety percent of the faculty rejected the proposition that schools would be better off without department heads (Callahan, 1971).

In the universities and slightly less so in the four-year colleges, the departmental system is also the predominant form of organization. There are few colleges in which disciplines are combined as they are in the community colleges. The emphasis on scholarship rather than teaching in the university tends to make for fractionating knowledge into smaller units. Departments of French, German, Spanish, etc. are more common than departments or divisions of foreign languages; departments of anatomy, biology, botany, and physiology are more common than departments of life sciences.

The trend toward combining disciplines has had a long history in the community colleges because of both positive and negative factors. Economy of operation was an important reason. Until the end of World War II community colleges were small in terms of student enrollment and the number of instructors. Groupings had to be made. Since the subjects taught were usually of an elementary nature, faculty worked in two or more disciplines, not necessarily closely related. In fact, certificated instructors were qualified to teach almost any subject. Licensing in a discipline came much later as requirements increased in all public schools and knowledge of the subject matter became a more important qualification than completion of education courses. However, scholarship in the discipline is still secondary to teaching ability.

No matter how determined some administrators are to subordinate or to abolish the department, the faculty within each discipline think of themselves as a close-knit community with interests different from those of other disciplines. At times, it seems as if faculty loyalty to the discipline is higher than

loyalty to the college. Paradoxically, the faculty consider themselves to be the college--a conviction not quite as strong as that of university faculties. In contrast, boards of trustees and to a slightly lesser extent administrators classify faculty as employees. In collective bargaining agreements the employee-employer relationship is expressed in the first paragraph of the contract. The fact that euphemisms are substituted for the more common terms of employee-employer relationship does not diminish the relationship in any material way, as exemplified in workload, salary, fringe benefits, hiring and firing and grievance provisions (Pandarus, 1973).

The department in the community college is only slightly less impregnable than it is in four-year colleges and universities. As will become evident here and in the description of other models, the disciplines if not the departmental organization are among the most stable elements in the college structure--in the newer models as well as in the older.

Membership of the Department

The department, then, is a community of full-time instructors with specialized knowledge. This community exerts enormous influence on the quality of the educational program. The chairman may not enjoy high prestige in some institutions; but in nearly all of them, the department itself has status, if not prestige, because of its tremendous impact on the character of the institution. In the classrooms of the department's instructors the primary mission of the college is carried on.

In the department new instructors get their most intensive indoctrination on the goals of the department and the college, an indoctrination far more effective than that conducted by the college. Indoctrination is continuous, but not formal; it is a responsibility exercised by nearly all members of the department (Kingston, 1972).

The community college department, an outgrowth of the secondary school department in which self-governance is limited, is moving closer to the four-year college or university department in which the instructors exercise a great deal of self-governance. This development toward the senior college model accounts for some of the administrators' misgivings toward this organizational unit. A department composed of specialists tends to further its own interests and in many cases those of its members rather than the needs of the institution, the students or the community (Bushnell, 1973). Many administrators consider the department divisive, unsatisfactory and deleterious to institutional unity.

In addition to a voice in the appointment of the chairman in many colleges, instructors play an active role in the selection and evaluation of new instructors. Also, each instructor may exercise the right to select the text and other materials for his classes except in courses with multiple sections, all instructors participate in the selection. In some colleges an instructor may also use a text or materials he has personally prepared. His potential for profit from royalties is not considered a conflict of interest nor an unethical practice.

With increasing frequency instructors are participating in the preparation of the schedule of courses to be offered including the method of distributing the courses among the instructors. Though control of course scheduling is subject to rules established by the dean of instruction, instructors through pressure for maintaining standards have resisted administration efforts to offer less than college-type courses for low aptitude students. To get around this resistance administrators have been forced to create new departments variously labeled developmental or opportunity.

Governance in the Department

The departmental community insists on a large measure of self-governance; yet it is not egalitarian. Tenured status and seniority are important assets to the members, especially when privileges are parceled out or retrenchment takes place. Tenured members have more job security than the non-tenured; probationary, full-time instructors more than part-time. Assignments to courses, classrooms and offices, to summer session and extra pay positions are awarded on the basis of seniority. The order of separation of faculty due to insufficient enrollment, curtailment of programs, or budgetary deficiencies is in the reverse order--part-time, non-tenured, and then tenured starting with those with the lowest seniority.

Full-time instructors have been concerned with the practice of hiring part-time instructors paid at a lower rate than the full-time. Administrators claim that hiring part-time instructors gives them greater resources of talent and experience, prevents overstaffing, avoids the disagreeable task of separating full-time faculty if enrollment declines, and saves money. Faculty believe that financial consideration is the real reason for this practice and attempt to control it by pressuring the board to adopt a policy limiting their number and/or requiring that their salary be a fraction of the regular salary schedule based on the proportion of the part-time to the full-time normal workload.

Within most departments the struggle between the two opposed principles--the "administration is the master of the faculty" versus the "administration is the servant of the faculty" has been resolved in favor of the faculty, a resolution abhorrent to most administrators (Pandarus, 1973).

Part-time instructors play a minor role and have little voice in the governance of the department. Most of them teach only one class in the evening or

at random hours during the day. Since they have only a minimum responsibility outside their teaching assignment, they are not expected to and most of them do not participate in the department or college affairs. Likewise, in collective bargaining agreements part-time instructors are often not included in the bargaining unit unless they teach more than 50% of the maximum contract load, more than two classes per term or some similar rule. A recent National Labor Relations Board ruling in an independent college case upheld the exclusion of part-time faculty from the bargaining unit. While this ruling does not apply to public colleges, it conforms to the current practice in most public colleges (Chronicle of Higher Education, July 1973). Another part of the NLRB ruling granting part-time faculty the right to negotiate separately may be applied to public colleges by the state boards, but the evidence is not conclusive. Faculty employee units are becoming more inclusive as the collective bargaining movement spreads.

Non-Faculty Members of the Department

Besides the chairman and instructors, departmental units often include laboratory assistants, storekeepers, technicians, clerical workers, paraprofessionals, readers, tutors, and counselors among others. The number of these in a department will vary according to the requirements of the subject or discipline and the size of the department. Often these auxiliary employees may be shared by two or more departments. The number of such employees has increased as more departments come to use the new teaching technologies-media, autotutorial laboratories, instructional television, computer assisted instruction, peer tutoring, work-study; as chairmen and faculty press for clerical and technical assistance; and as administrators decentralize such services as counseling, job placement, and financial aid.

Auxiliary employees rarely take part in the governance of the department. Their function is thought to be to serve the needs of the department as directed by the instructor, chairman or other administrator and up to now, the movement toward participatory democracy has barely touched them. But the spread of collective bargaining may change this as colleges begin to include such employees in the bargaining unit. For example, in the City University of New York system of colleges, science assistants and technicians are included in the bargaining unit and in a number of the community colleges of the State University of New York, the bargaining unit includes employees in graphic arts and industrial sections; technical, material specialists, general equipment, audio-visual and laboratory assistants; and media specialists (McHugh & O'Sullivan, 1971). If these employees are attached to a department, they may in time be given a voice in its governance. There is as yet little evidence, however, to suggest that at present they have a significant voice except in the areas affecting their working conditions and their relationships with the instructors and the chairman.

The same situation exists for counselors, financial aid officers and placement personnel who may be assigned to a department or group of departments. Personnel so assigned do not become members of the department; they continue to be members of their primary unit. While in departmental meetings, counselors, student aid personnel and placement coordinators may participate, they have only a limited voice in the deliberations. Librarians and directors of media centers may also be invited to departmental meetings but in the capacity of resource persons rather than as active participants in the shaping of policy.

A reassessment of attitude toward the paraprofessionals is taking place as

faculty leaders are becoming more amenable to including them as members of the bargaining unit. They are aware of the potential danger in that paraprofessionals and other nonprofessional technicians could be used to staff classes during a strike and of the added bargaining strength the unit acquires with the membership of all of those connected with the teaching-learning unit.

Students in the Department

Students, of course, are also members of a department. In some departments they play a role in the decision-making process; in others they are hardly ever involved in the governance of the department, except for their participation in class discussion, or the occasional completion of an evaluation form on the instructor's effectiveness. Students who major in a discipline such as English or political science may take an active part within the department and may have some influence on its governance. The rest of the students who take one or at the most two courses do not develop an attachment to the department. The most active role is played by students in such departments as foreign languages, life sciences, mathematics, physical education, vocational-technical areas and other subjects where they take one or two courses in a semester and/or a sequence of courses over three or four semesters. Those taking laboratory courses also spend a great deal of time in the department.

Informally, students majoring in the department may be consulted by instructors and chairmen for curriculum suggestions. Sometimes, such students are leaders in the clubs and activities conducted under departmental auspices. Often, they are given paid assignments as tutors, laboratory assistants, readers, graders, and equipment caretakers. In ethnic studies departments such as Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Native American Studies, students may participate to a limited extent in recruiting, hiring and evaluating instructors and

in the development of curriculum offerings (Lombardi, 1971).

In the classroom the students are at the mercy of the instructor. Tradition clothes the instructor with divine right, derived by virtue of degrees and credentials conferred by the university and the state. His authority over students seems as autocratic as that of a divine right ruler, although it may be a case of benevolent despotism. Once enrolled in a class, students have little recourse regarding most aspects of the learning process. A bill of rights and a statement of confidentiality of student records have been drawn but these documents have little effect on the ruler-ruled relationship in the classroom (Lombardi, 1969). For the most part, "the college teacher is, perhaps, the only professional whose professional act is performed in almost absolute privacy" (Hodgkinson, 1972, pp. 214-215).

Although interest in student rights has waned since reaching its peak during the activism of the 1960's, it has never completely disappeared. In the last two or three years a resurgence of interest has surfaced, partly as a result of the spread of collective bargaining in colleges and universities. Student leaders see collective bargaining as an avenue for gaining a voice in governance in matters of concern to them (Bucklew, 1973). Most of this interest, however, is confined to the senior colleges and universities; little of it has been noted in the community colleges. But if past experience is a guide, the community colleges will be influenced by the results achieved by students in the senior institutions. Another factor affecting student involvement is the increasing number of student workers.

All students are involved directly and indirectly in collective bargaining since many issues and agreements relate to student interests. In the event of a strike for example, the immediate effect on students would be the loss of

class time, sometimes for weeks. The threat of closing college for the semester or quarter is often heard during strikes. Furthermore, if salary and fringe benefits for faculty increase inordinately, the amount of money available for tutors, student aid and new instructors may be inadequate. In some negotiating sessions students are permitted to sit as observers or even as participants in matters affecting them. In a few cases student workers are represented by virtue of their inclusion in the employee unit.

Student activism is still a minor movement in the community college and has not materially changed the student-teacher relationship within the department (Bucklew, 1973). Yet the potential for change is present as was demonstrated during the student activism of the 1964-1970 period. The series of disturbances first led by white students and later by black, Mexican American and other ethnic students proved that aroused students under capable and militant leaders can gain concessions from administrators.

During the early student activism period there was some agitation for relevant courses and programs but the major push was directed against the administration with emphasis on the elimination of PARIETAL rules and the privacy of student records. A student bill of rights and a statement of confidentiality of student records were adopted by professional organizations but these did not relate directly to the departments (Lombardi, 1969). A concession obtained during this period that relates to the department is student representation on faculty selection committees, a practice still prevalent in many colleges although sometimes restricted to an advisory capacity.

By contrast black, Mexican American and other racial and ethnic students gained many concessions, most of which impinged on the governance of the department and the student-instructor relationships. Through a form of bargaining

between the student leaders and the president, written demands and written replies were made, although no binding contracts resulted. The implementation of the agreements rested on the good faith of the administrators. Illustrative of the demands affecting the department, the chairman and instructors are the following made by black student groups:

1. That black studies courses and programs be introduced and taught by black instructors selected by black students. In some colleges, a black studies department was to be organized under a black chairman. In other colleges, black studies courses might be distributed among the appropriate departments;

2. That black instructors be recruited for all subjects;

3. That curriculum changes be made in all courses and textbooks to incorporate the black contribution, infuse the black experience and eliminate racist references;

4. That grading practices be changed;

5. That discriminatory enrollment practices be eliminated in apprenticeship and transfer courses, gifted student programs and athletics.

6. That instructors be evaluated by students (Lombardi, 1970).

Departmental vs. College Goals: An Issue

In the overwhelming majority of colleges the departmental offices of the instructors and chairman and the classrooms and laboratories used by the department are grouped together. For large departments an entire building or a wing of a large building may be assigned: auto mechanics, biology, broadcasting, chemistry, engineering-technology buildings are fairly common. Colleges housed in large buildings may allocate a floor or a part of a floor to a department. Some instructional units must be separated or isolated because of the excessive noise and vibration of equipment or because of unusual structural requirements

such as high ceilings, large open areas, auditoriums, playing fields, or rooms insulated for sound.

Colleges are now experimenting with various plans for mixing departmental units in the same building and scheduling classes in different subjects in the same rooms and laboratories. Some schools have gone even further by having faculty from different departments share office space. Considerable progress has been made toward eliminating the physical separation of academic and vocational-technical units common in the early years of the community colleges. These changes are often associated with the introduction of new models of instructional units and the development of interdisciplinary courses and programs. A major purpose of these experiments is to counteract the insularity of groupings by subject matter, to encourage the development of a commonality of purpose directed at college goals rather than departmental goals, and to facilitate interdisciplinary activity.

Departments or divisions that have both academic and vocational-technical courses and programs are the most successful in this integration process. Instructors and students participate in both types of courses; students often start as vocational-technical majors but graduate as preprofessional majors, and vice versa. Examples of such units are engineering technology, health sciences, public services, radio and television broadcasting, theatre arts, etc.

Attempts to fuse widely different groups, however, have had minimal success. The need and desire for close association among instructors teaching the same or similar disciplines proves a strong deterrent to such efforts. Only a few colleges have succeeded in organizing a large number of interdisciplinary courses and programs and a much smaller number in bringing together members of different subjects or disciplines.

Departments also serve as repositories for supplies and equipment and a few maintain departmental libraries. The extent to which these functions are carried on by a department varies with the department. When supplies or equipment are shared by two or more instructors, most departments usually have an informal arrangement enabling an instructor to pick up the item he needs from a central departmental storeroom. Frequently used equipment--maps, overhead projectors, demonstration slide rules, pianos, etc. are often kept in the classrooms. Departments such as the sciences, art, music, physical education, theatre arts, and vocational-technical departments which require extensive use of supplies, equipment and special manuals, pamphlets and books often have storerooms and special employees to take care of receiving, storing, repairing, and distributing the materials under the chairman's supervision.

Departments also maintain records, course outlines, seniority rosters of instructors, and rotation lists for assignments for summer session, extra pay assignments and sabbaticals; inventories; various student records; instructors' class and room schedules; lists of applicants for positions and possible job placement opportunities; minutes of departmental and advisory committee meetings, and correspondence. The more energetic chairmen may also keep a longitudinal record of enrollments, grade distribution, and retention rates for the department as a whole and for the individual courses. The vocational-technical departments may maintain files of students who have been employed in jobs related to their educational specialty.

Student activities are conducted under the auspices of the department. Included in this category are clubs; honor and scholarship teas; lectures; pre-graduation awards ceremonies; special exhibits and recitals; mathematics,

speech, journalism, and science contests; alumni associations (O'Grady, 1971). As was mentioned earlier these departmental activities involve more students and have more appeal than the regular college programs.

The marked difference between the community college and the university is reflected in the activities of the individual departments. The community college department, unlike its university counterpart, has little interest in research and concentrates instead on instructional activities.

Conclusion

In the matter of self-governance, the community college department is moving closer to the university model. The extreme example of this trend may be found in the City University of New York system where community colleges are covered by the same agreements as the universities. Most of the governing rights granted to the university departments also apply to the community colleges. On the other hand, through the codification of faculty-administrative relations, collective bargaining agreements in four-year colleges introduce practices that approach those common in community colleges. These policies include the definition of workloads, the modification of the merit system, the loosening of the control of promotions by senior professors, and greater job security for junior members through tenure provisions (Mortimer and Lozier, 1972).

Community college officials are trying to counteract this trend toward self-governance by creating a different teaching-learning unit and by replacing the chairman with an administrator. Colleges not yet covered by collective bargaining agreements are making the most headway in this process, although it is possible for a school operating with an agreement to maintain such a new unit.

Among organizational units the department is getting more attention and probably is undergoing as much change as any unit in the community college governance structure. This is not surprising since as presently constituted education is based on the instructors and the subjects they teach. Closely related to these fundamental facts is the higher education tradition of participatory democracy. Collective bargaining agreements tend to reduce the administrator's authority over the departmental activities and to increase that of the instructors. In colleges not covered by collective bargaining agreements policy manuals and handbooks which contain board of trustees regulations have a similar effect, although often the rights granted to instructors may be qualified as advisory.

Within a department may be found various classes of employees, instructors, nonteaching professionals, e.g., librarians, counselors, paraprofessionals and technicians. Among instructors equality prevails in the working conditions, salaries, and fringe benefits; seniority rights, however, give the older tenured instructors preference in assignments and extra pay opportunities. They also have greater job security during periods of retrenchment. The other members of the department are not active participants in the governance of the department, although if they are members of the bargaining unit they have a voice in the resolution of issues involving their interests.

Administrators are experimenting with various forms of new structures to replace the department and the chairman. Most common is the divisional structure with an administrator as its head. Other structures are adaptations of the cluster college type in which the department or division and chairman are eliminated. At present there may be twenty to thirty colleges with such a structure.

An evaluation of their efficacy in eliminating the disadvantages of the departmental organization has yet to be reported. Failures are high.

A substitute for the department may come when the learning-teaching process is changed so that the student has more control of the learning process. Such an experiment was tried on a college-wide basis at Oakland County Community College in Michigan in 1965 (Tirrell, 1967) but it was abandoned in 1968 (Lehto, 1972). A few colleges have introduced a systems plan on a limited basis. However, for the next five to ten years departments or divisions will continue to be the most common organizational structure in the community college.

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